

Ruth Colvin has dedicated her entire life to teaching, assisting, and empowering adult learners. She has taught thousands of people to read, trained literacy tutors in 26 countries, and developed and published effective programs to teach basic literacy and English as a second language.

Because of her efforts, hundreds of thousands of adults have learned to read both locally in central New York and around the globe. Over more than four decades, Ruth Colvin has published nine books, visited or worked in more than 60 countries, and received nine honorary doctorate degrees. She was awarded the President's Volunteer Action Award from President Ronald Reagan, received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President George W. Bush, and was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

Ruth Colvin has given so many the gift of literacy. On December 16 of this year, she will turn 100 years old.

Please join me in honoring her tremendous life's work and her legacy as we celebrate this milestone. Happy birthday, Ruth, and many, many more.

ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. GUTIÉRREZ) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned about what is going on in Israel, and I think it has implications both for U.S. foreign policy, for domestic policy, and for our own ally, Israel.

As the rightwing government of Netanyahu consolidates power and becomes, in many ways, the one-party rulers of Israel, a number of things are changing that should be of concern to all Americans. Specifically, the increasing dominance of the Likud Party as the one-party in Israel jeopardizes the two-state solution that I and many others in the United States and Israel feel is the only way to achieve long-term peace in the Middle East.

There is a retrenchment of hardline policies—aimed at solidifying alliances with smaller religious and hardline parties that keep Likud in power—that will make it harder for Israelis, their allies in America, and anyone who seeks a lasting peace to maintain progress towards a two-state solution.

Right now, the Knesset is considering legislation to legalize all Israeli settlements in Palestinian territory on the West Bank, even those constructed on private Palestinian land. Boom—400,000 people in settlements across the West Bank. It is all legal because they say it is legal, but it is not.

Israel is destroying Palestinian homes at a pace faster than we have ever seen before. It is provocative, sweeping, and designed to make it harder to ever reach an agreement with the Palestinians. The plan to restrict the Muslim call to prayer in Jerusalem has been revived, again to placate hardline religious constituents by

Prime Minister Netanyahu. There is no statement clearer to people of the Islamic faith that they do not matter, that they do not belong, and that they will not be tolerated than to restrict the Muslim call to prayer in Jerusalem—a city that has heard the Muslim call to prayer for thousands of years.

I think what is going on in Israel with Prime Minister Netanyahu presents a cautionary tale about the consequences of following a political strongman. The strongman has to keep proving that he is a strongman over and over. Like other strongmen who ride fear into leadership—when you base your political career on injecting fear and resentment into political affairs, when you use the backdrop of terrorism and the understandable fear of the Israeli people as a political tool for years and decades—this is the kind of policy that results.

There is an appetite for constant escalation of what you are doing to stand up to the enemy you have constructed—an enemy based on but not the same as the enemies that fight against the State of Israel, tolerance, and peace in real life. Strongmen construct a foil—in this case based on the Palestinians, but sometimes exaggerated beyond recognition—and they need to feed the thirst for more and more action to attack the caricature that they have constructed.

But strongman politics in Israel has the impact of making a long-lasting solution that brings peace to the Middle East even harder to achieve. The fundamental rights of Palestinians to have their own state—a state alongside the Israeli state where they have the same basic rights and dignity to govern themselves and raise their families in peace—that is what most Israelis, Palestinians, and people around the world have been fighting for.

If we are ever going to achieve the permanent peace that allows Israel to exist without fear and Palestine to exist without occupation then we must continue to fight for the two-state solution.

When I was just a freshman, almost 25 years ago, we celebrated the accomplishments of Rabin, Arafat, and President Clinton to build towards a peace that recognizes the rights and dignity of the Israelis and the rights and dignity of the Palestinian people. For decades, the United States—under different leaders in different parties from Carter to Reagan to Bush to Obama—has recognized that peace will only come with mutual respect and tolerance. That is what we have based our foreign policy on and should continue to base our foreign policy on. Having talked with average people and with leaders on both sides of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, I am convinced that is the only way forward toward peace.

America has been a catalyst—a constructive influence from outside, a nation based on religious freedom and de-

mocracy that has served as a model for both Palestinians and Israelis—and we have worked towards helping parties continue to move in the direction of two separate but mutually respectful countries, two nations that are not at war with each other or subservient to one another.

I fear, Mr. Speaker, that Israel herself is moving away from the two-state solution as a goal and that we, as her closest ally, must remind her, and ourselves, of what is at stake if we lose sight of this important goal.

PROTECTING PENSIONS OF COAL MINERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. MOONEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge swift passage of H.R. 2403, the Coal Healthcare and Pensions Protection Act. This important legislation protects the pensions of coal workers who have spent their lives producing affordable, reliable energy for our country.

These miners were promised a pension when they signed up for the job, and, ever since the Truman administration, Congress has made sure that the commitment is honored. It is our duty to continue to uphold this promise made to our miners.

Without help from Congress this year, the United Mine Workers of America pension fund will be insolvent in 2017, resulting in massive cuts to benefits for 22,000 West Virginia mine workers and their families. The Coal Healthcare and Pensions Protection Act provides relief funding for these pensions without increasing spending of taxpayer dollars. Our country's hardworking coal miners are responsible for fueling and shaping our economy over the last 250 years. Retired coal miners and their widows deserve our respect, appreciation, and, above all else, the benefits that they were promised.

With 47 Republican and 40 Democrat cosponsors in the House, this bill is strongly supported by Members on both sides of the aisle. Again, I urge our leadership to bring H.R. 2403, the Coal Healthcare and Pensions Protection Act, to a vote immediately.

CONGRATULATING DR. TOM PRICE

Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate my colleague and Budget Committee chairman, Dr. TOM PRICE, on President-elect Trump's recent appointment as the new Secretary for the Department of Health and Human Services. Chairman PRICE has become a friend to me over the past 2 years and will continue to do great things in his new job in the Trump administration.

When I was first elected to serve West Virginia's Second Congressional District in 2014, I promised my constituents that I would fight to repeal the Affordable Care Act, also known as